

February 20, 2015 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Larry Thomas] In October, the outbreak of Ebola in Liberia's capital city was coming under control, but reports of Ebola clusters in remote parts of the country continued to come in every day. As a result, CDC and the Liberian Ministry of Health developed RITE -- a strategy for rapidly responding to reports of new outbreaks. Dr. Satish Pillai, a medical officer with CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, was one of the original RITE team members.

[Dr. Pillai] RITE stands for Rapid Isolation and Treatment of Ebola. RITE was not just surveillance, but a holistic approach of trying to figure out how best to address a outbreak.

[Larry Thomas] When CDC and its partners first hear about unexplained deaths in remote parts of the country, they quickly mobilize a team and assess the situation on the ground.

[Dr. Pillai] In some instances, we needed to be helicoptered in to villages because they were so remote; in some instances, we had to walk through the jungle for several hours.

[Larry Thomas] Once they're in the village, RITE members rapidly identify symptomatic patients, isolate them, investigate the chain of transmission, and find everyone they came in contact with. The RITE team also defines the roles CDC, partners, and local health officials play in the response.

[Dr. Pillai] One size would not fit all; you would have to really look at the conditions on the ground, see what the community needed.

[Larry Thomas] If patients are too sick to walk to the closest care facility, CDC arranges for a clinical partner to set up a temporary Ebola treatment unit. If the community is having trouble accessing food, the World Food Program is added to the response. The locals appreciate the effort.

[Dr. Pillai] They were appreciative that we were not just there to help with their Ebola outbreak, but also identifying their other needs -- their food needs, their sanitation needs, their water needs. It was Ebola, but it was so much more.

[Larry Thomas] A new report shows the number of people who died from Ebola in Liberia went down 40 percent once this strategy was put in place. The duration of the outbreak was also cut in half. Similar programs are now being implemented in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.